



## State of New Jersey

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**TO:** Chief School Administrators  
Charter School Lead Persons

**FROM:** Jay Doolan, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Educational Standards and Programs

**SUBJECT:** Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

In this memo, I will review some key provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law to provide further clarification on the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements. While all districts have made significant progress in meeting the requirements, New Jersey as yet has not reached the federal goal of all of its teachers being highly qualified.

The areas of clarification discussed in this memo include the following: (1) definitions of self-contained and departmentalized settings in grades 5 through 8, (2) general education and special education teachers teaching grades K through 8, and (3) teachers employing Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) flexibility.

### **1. Definitions of Departmentalized and Self-contained Settings in Grades 5-8 for General Education and Special Education Teachers**

A self-contained setting in grades 5-8 is defined as follows: Teachers of a grade level are responsible for teaching at least three of the four core academic content areas (language arts, mathematics, social studies, science) to their students. Students receive instruction from another teacher in no more than one core academic content area.

A departmentalized setting in grades 5-8 is defined as follows: Teachers of a grade level are teaching fewer than three of the four core academic content areas (language arts, mathematics, social studies, science) to their students. Students receive instruction from another teacher(s) in the remaining core academic content areas.

Special education teachers in grades 5-8 must meet highly qualified requirements consistent with those required of the general education teachers in self-contained and departmentalized settings. Therefore, if a grade level is departmentalized, teachers providing direct instruction in grades 5-8

(including pull-out replacement resource programs) must meet highly qualified requirements at the middle grades level in each core academic subject they teach in grades 5-8.

## **2. Teachers Holding the K-5 Instructional Certificate**

Teachers who hold the K-5 instructional certificate are certified to provide instruction **only** in grades K-5.

To teach in a self-contained setting: These teachers must be highly qualified as elementary generalists by passing the Praxis II Elementary Content Knowledge Test.

To teach in a departmentalized setting in grade 5: These teachers must demonstrate content knowledge at the middle school level in each core academic content area they teach. They may demonstrate content knowledge in a core academic content area by satisfying one of the following federal requirements:

- Pass the Praxis II Middle Content Test or K-12 Content Test; or
- Have an undergraduate major in the content area; or
- Have 30 credits equivalent to a major (at least 12 credits at the upper division or graduate levels) in the content area; or
- Have a graduate degree in the content area; or
- Hold National Board certification in the content area.

**Note:** These teachers do not need to hold the Middle School Endorsement.

## **3. Teachers Holding the Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD) with the K-5 Instructional Certificate**

Teachers who hold the SWD are certified to teach **only** in the area of their instructional certificate.

Teachers who hold the SWD with the K-5 instructional certificate are certified to provide direct instruction **only** in grades K-5.

In order to provide direct instruction in grades 6, 7, or 8, whether in a self-contained or departmentalized setting, they must hold the middle school endorsement for the subject(s) they are teaching.

In summary, a special education teacher who teaches a self-contained class in grades 6-8 must hold all four middle school endorsements, one in each core academic content area.

#### **4. Teachers Holding the Teacher of the Handicapped (TOH) or Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD) with the N-8 Instructional Certificate Teaching Grades N-8**

To teach in a self-contained setting: Teachers who hold the TOH or SWD endorsement with the N-8 instructional certificate and who provide direct instruction in self-contained settings in grades K-8 must be highly qualified as elementary generalists by passing the Praxis II Elementary Content Knowledge Test.

To teach in a departmentalized setting: Teachers who hold the TOH or SWD endorsement with the N-8 instructional certificate and who provide direct instruction in departmentalized settings in grades 5-8 must be highly qualified in each core academic content area they teach. They may demonstrate content knowledge in a core academic content area by satisfying one of the following federal requirements:

- Pass the Praxis II Middle Content Test or K-12 Content Test; or
- Have an undergraduate major in the content area; or
- Have 30 credits equivalent to a major (at least 12 credits at the upper division or graduate levels) in the content area; or
- Have a graduate degree in the content area; or
- Hold National Board certification in the content area.

#### **5. Teachers Employing IDEA Flexibility**

Novice special education teachers meeting the following three criteria may use the NJ HOUSE Matrix for two years from the date of hire to demonstrate they are highly qualified in additional subjects:

- Hold the appropriate certification, i.e., Teacher of the Handicapped (TOH) or Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD);
- Hold the N-8 or K-5 Elementary Teacher Instructional Certificate; and
- Are highly qualified at the time of hiring in either math, science, or language arts literacy using the federal requirements described in sections number two and four of this memo.

If the teacher employing the IDEA flexibility is providing direct instruction in a subject in which he or she is not yet highly qualified, the district must report on the State Certificated Staff Report that this teacher is not highly qualified.

**Note:** A veteran teacher holding the N-8 Elementary Teacher Instructional Certificate is considered to be a novice special education teacher if he or she is certified TOH or SWD and has been assigned to teach special education for the first time.

To ensure that educators receive updated, timely information and are maintaining accurate records, teachers and administrators are encouraged to review the HQT web site located at [www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb](http://www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb). A revised HQT manual will be posted in a few weeks; we urge teachers and administrators to download the newly revised manual for easy reference.

If you have any questions regarding the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements, please contact Carol Albritton, teacher quality coordinator, at (609) 777-4482 or by emailing [HQTeachers@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:HQTeachers@doe.state.nj.us).

JD/CP/EAS/CA/S:\Alfie\Highly Qualified Teacher Project\Memo to CSAs re Clarification of HQT.doc

c: Members, State Board of Education

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